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ABSTRACT

Today's language arts teacher must adapt himself to the individually-paced classroom environment of the future by utilizing the newest procedures in his field within the current structures of the heterogeneous, homogeneous, or "core"-type classroom. The teacher of a heterogeneous group must insure individual student progress by differentiating the levels, content, and objectives of work assigned. In the homogeneous class structure, he must create experiences which differ in kind, not volume, for high, average and low groups--e.g., independent study for high, teacher-directed committee work for average, and concrete, utilitarian objectives for low. The core program implies a thematic, interdisciplinary approach where the understanding of language arts is enhanced by sociological, historical, and other implications of a topic, with the use of varied audiovisual materials and resource people. If teacher performance is to be evaluated competently, then an awareness of new developments and goals is essential. (MF)

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Evaluating Tomorrow's English Teachers

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Predictions for tomorrow's classroom stress the ascendency of the individual through such nascent innovations as programmed learning, computer teachers, team teaching, phasing, individual-learning carrels and a host of other devices all of which imply, ultimately, teachers who are educated to handle the changes brought about by this technology. Target dates for this great reform on a national scale range anywhere from 1970 to 2000 depending on the professional journal read. Until these dates are reached, teachers are supposed to be in a process of "retooling." Nationally, this retooling is implicit in programs such as Project English, National Science Foundation Institutes and Project Social Studies, all of which have the common objective: updating and re-educating teachers to newer content and techniques in their disciplines.

Meanwhile, back on the campuses, those responsible for educating teachers are hopefully educating them to an awareness of these innovations and their consequent implications for classroom teaching. Pragmatically, though, the media breakthrough has not yet penetrated very far into most school systems; so some transitional steps based on today's reality must structure some of the contents in teacher education. Prospective English teachers know about the predicated changes as well as the current realities. Their teaching behavior should reflect this medial position between today's realities and tomorrow's predictions. To provide a yardstick for measuring English teachers' understanding of these newer concepts is the purpose of this report.

Today English is a constellation of disciplines — linguistics, communications, composition and literary criticism. Today's English teachers are supposed to be specialists in the *inter-relationships* among these disciplines. In practice, this specialization demands that the teacher weave, skillfully, all of the language arts (reading, writing, speaking and listening) into a focused, articulated pattern. Teaching behavior characteristic of this contemporary English teacher should reveal:

a. Detailed knowledge of each student based on a compass of human growth patterns, community aims, academic and vocational aspirations.
b. Flexible procedures, contents and objectives for levels of language arts students being taught.
c. Broadened applications of language arts skills to other subjects in the secondary curriculum: art, music, mathematics, biological science, etc.
d. Expanded uses of community resources in teaching the language arts: A-V aids, resource visitors, field trips, closed and educational TV, IBM installations, etc.
e. Principles and concepts of teaching the language arts in the secondary schools which are derived from their knowledge of both elementary and post-high school objectives of language arts programs.

Today, most teachers of the language arts find themselves teaching according to one of three curricular philosophies: heterogeneous grouping, homogeneous grouping, or core grouping. Each of these three teaching environments requires observable

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adaptations of the methods used to teach English. Such adaptations are frequently truncated by elements of the "old guard," administrative fiats, or community pressures. In common, these three inhibiting sources to teacher innovation seem to fear change. One consequence of this fear is that teachers, trained in the latest methods for handling different learning situations, may not have a chance to reveal their knowledge and skill.

When no environmental hindrances are present, language arts teachers working with heterogeneous groups should:

a. Provide for differentiated experiences in each unit of work planned so that all students in the class are advancing their respective skills in the language arts.
b. Include group work as part of every unit; groups should be organized around pupil identified topics within a teacher-student structure where each topic, in turn, fits into a clearly designed, overarching unit objective.
c. Understand and apply different evaluation procedures, longitudinal and cross-sectional, in ascertaining students' learning in the language arts.
d. Organize procedures so that variety is apparent even to the casual observer, particularly at the junior high level. Varied procedures should include (within a single class period) reading and writing or speaking and listening or viewing and drill. Depending on the range of class abilities, some adaptation for in-class supervised study with attention to individuals should also be practiced.
e. Use folder systems for students' compositions and/or readings so that continuous progress reports on each student are maintained.
f. Know and use referral procedures for speech, reading and other problems observed in the language arts classroom.
g. Describe the functional relationships of language arts skills, e.g., vocabulary, grammar, spelling, composition, homework assignments, etc., to each unit being studied. The "why" of each assigned spelling list, vocabulary list, grammar exercise should relate directly to the aims, materials and procedures of the particular unit under study.
h. Explain the basis for comments and corrections on students' written exercises and have some logical system (understood by all students) for grades assigned to such written compositions.
i. Know and use sources of information in choosing standardized tests, reading materials, textbooks and other designs for modern English programs, e.g., curricular bulletins.
j. Have some plan or procedure for keeping up with new developments in the teaching of English, e.g., subscription to professional publications, time set aside for reviewing materials on the teaching of English drawn from the school or community library.
k. Describe how the materials and methods used on any given day add to previous material studied and anticipate learning experiences planned for the future — clearly observable steps with sequential reinforcement should be the most noteworthy evi-

dence of an English teacher's skill in a heterogeneous classroom situation.

English teachers assigned to schools using homogeneous grouping should:

a. Have observable differences in lesson plans as to the language arts experiences for each group taught depending upon the "level" of the group involved: high, average or low.
b. Provide experiences different in kind (not volume) for 'high' groups, e.g., independent study, research projects, detailed analysis of language, extensive teacher-pupil planning, expository writing.
c. Provide experiences for the "average" group which tend to be more teacher-directed, involve more of the drill-skill teaching method than would be found with the "high" group; use much supplementary material drawn from community, involve committee work, round-table, debate as frequent supplements to regular procedures.
d. Provide experiences for the "low" group which are concrete and highly utilitarian; included in these experiences would be such activities as filling out job application blanks, frequent use of study guides tied directly to textual material, heavy concentration on oral-aural drills for correct usage, role playing of interview situations, use of many visual devices and models to teach language arts concepts; use of class time for supervised study of assigned homework.
e. Devise developmental reading programs for each level being taught. With academic groups, a planned period for free reading in a regularly assigned class period. Books selected should be wide-ranging and encompass the spectra of literature. With "average" groups, the free reading program plus standardized reading exercises designed to increase speed, comprehension, and other language skills associated with reading, e.g., vocabulary, spelling, outlining. With "low" groups, methods should include two to three periods a week set aside for developing all aspects of the reading program (comprehension, spelling, vocabulary, speed) with mastery of reading skills as one goal of the program. Teachers might use free reading periods with low groups, provided prepared study guides are used in connection with books selected, and that the books span the range of reading levels of the students in the group. The Science Research Associates' program is an example of the program recommended for "low" classes in homogeneously grouped schools.
f. Concentrate his methods around the individuals involved. In spite of the homogeneous nature of the classes, the range of individual differences will always be such that only the most chimerical of teachers would assume complete homogeneity for any group.

English teachers hired to teach a core program should be carefully selected for their assignments. Key to a core teacher's skill is his ability to generalize and synthesize; to see relationships, to provide connections among tangential topics. Definitions of core vary widely but, ideally, core should always be recognized by its needs-based structure. In practice, "ideal core" requires the teacher and students to focus on a topic

which engages the interest of all students and is vital to their existence. Today such a topic might be "survival." Out of teacher-pupil discussion of this topic should come a structure for examining all of the implications of the topic: historical, social, political, geographic, language arts, and other pertinent disciplines. The topic or focus is the "core" around which skills traditionally associated with social studies and English are taught.

Many schools tend not to meet the requirements of "ideal core" programs. Instead, actual practice shows "block time" and/or "double periods" being set aside for students' participation in social studies and English. Attempts are allegedly made to fuse the contents of social studies and English in these programs by having, for example, Colonial literature parallel Colonial history. As observed, these programs might just as well be scheduled as separate disciplines; little if any correlation exists between the contents of the two programs except that they occupy the same historical time period.

With this preface in mind, English teachers assigned to core programs should:

a. Establish unit topics on the basis of teacher-pupil discussion.
b. Provide "contacts" with groups of students exploring sub-topics which involve interwoven skills of both social studies and language arts.
c. Provide a wide range of resource materials for use by students, e.g., film catalogs bibliographies, lists of resource people. Or, if this search for sources is one of the objectives of the core unit, to plan learning experiences in such a way that the student is led to seek out such references.
d. Evaluate, constantly, the progress of various groups toward their particular goals, offer helpful suggestions where necessary, and oversee the direction of groups' activities; where necessary, guide groups' directions.
e. Organize, when necessary, class experiences which are pertinent to the class as a whole, e.g., review outlining skills, compile common vocabulary lists, review grammatical constructions which groups' mistakes indicate are based on common need.
f. Shift students from group to group depending on each student's needs, skills, etc., as they are related to the topic being explored.
g. Reveal, through evaluative techniques used, his knowledge of minimal skills demanded by both social studies' and language arts' authorities for the grade level involved.
h. Concentrate on the individual as the prime source of evaluation. In core, as in other teaching situations, the English teacher should know where each student stands in academic achievement and base his evaluation on the progress each student makes from that point with reference to his social, emotional, mental or physical limitations.

Other experiences new English teachers may initiate are programmed learning, media instruction (educational television, computer learning) and team teaching. Again the criteria for evaluating the teacher's skillful utilization of these aids is how well such aids fit with other materials being used in the topic under study. If isolated, atomistic, they are dubious as aids and become more a case of busy work than learning experiences. If these aids articu-

late well, help to advance each student somewhat from his previous academic stage, then the English teacher is making full use of them in recommended ways. Programmed learning is not a workbook; when used as such it defeats the whole purpose of the program and becomes another form of busy work. Diagramming parts of speech should, depending on grade level, be used sparingly. Overemphasis on this content (six weeks or more) violates research findings which show that the value of such long time focus on these topics is virtually useless as far as students' improvement in language skills is concerned.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Tomorrow's teachers in today's classrooms are in a transitional stage between the old, teacher-structured classroom environment and the new, individually-paced classroom environment predicted for the next decade. The pace of the predicted change varies from school to school, but one result of federal programs to educate teachers for the coming change is the phenomenon of grouping where most students are in heterogeneous, homogeneous, or core-type programs. Each grouping procedure requires different process-structure constellations for teaching. Today's teachers have been educated to use these constellations but are frequently discouraged by static faculty members, administrative fiats, or their own fears of what the community might "say."

It is important for those who aspire to judge the competence of English teachers that they be aware of these changes in the education of English teachers, especially since these changes are the anlage for the curricular phases of the future. And like the anlage, without this prior stage of development in teaching procedures — and its *acceptance* by teachers — the probability of success for the next step in the frontiers of learning is doubtful. Teachers capable of flexibility, adaptability, and change in today's classrooms will become shapers of future designs for learning.

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